

Stockley Donelson to Andrew Jackson, October 14, 1834, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

STOCKLEY D. DONELSON TO JACKSON.

Nashville, October 14, 1834.

Dear Uncle, I address you a short note to day on the unfortunate occurance that took place at the Hermitage yesterday afternoon. I passed the Hermitage this morning and Andrew informed me that he had given you a detailed statement of the Burning of the Hermitage etc. I will again state to you as nearly as I can, what are the facts etc. A fire was kindled in the old dining room and the chimney caught on fire, which not being observed immediately, and the wind being from the North west, the fire was communicated to the roof. The flame however had not spread very far before it was discovered by Squire and Charles, and the alarm given. Cousin Sarah at this moment was in the house having just returned from a short ride and Andrew was in the field, But a short distance from the House. The fire was soon discovered by Wm. Donelson hands who were working near at hand, by A J Donelson work men and hands, as well as by your own hands. they were all on the ground before the roof fell in etc. Mr Rife by his own exertions succeeded in getting on the dining Room roof and extinguishing the flames etc. Others were employed in getting out the furniture etc. which was nearly all saved, except some bedsteads up stairs. I have made every enquiry. I interrogated Mr. Rife and Hume who were up stairs and in the old dining room where the fire was kindled first and they both say it was not an unreasonably large fire. The weather was very dry and windy. I can therefore I think assure you it was a perfect accident, about which no one is to blame. When the fire was first discovered by Charles and Squire they made ev[er]y effort to get a ladder. But none could be found, and there was no other way to get to the roof etc. Cousin sarah acted with

Library of Congress

firmness and gave every necessary direction to save the furniture, and Her and Andrew though *much Hurt* , I am happy to add bear the misfortune with fortitude.

The walls of the House being originally well built are not much damaged. The workmen Austin, Rife etc. say there will be no difficulty in rebuilding etc. Some of the petition walls and arches over the windows, and some other repairing of the walls all of which Mr. Austin can furnish brick to do by deferring the building of some of Maj Donelson back buildings. It can all be covered in before winter sets in, which it will be necessary to do, if the House is to be rebuilt in the same place etc; as the walls would be much damaged by being exposed to the winters rains. Andrew requested me to say to you that he would move to the Baldwin place, and will start 3 or 4 whip saws tomorrow, and will get ready to cover it in immediately, which is entirely practicable—Unless it should be your wish for him not to do so. I name this thinking that you might now have the house built higher up on the Hill, etc. The Timbers will all be in readiness by the time you can write here and Mr Austin just about that time will be ready to do whatever repairing may be necessary; I need scarcely add the great mortification as well as sympathy for this great loss etc. Cousin Sarah health is much improved. Sister Emily and children are now all well. I write from Nashville and can truly say your friends here are much distressed for this severe loss etc. Give my respects to Andrew and Mr Earl and accept for yourself my sincere attachment